

A  
TRUE AND MINUTE  
ACCOUNT  
OF THE DESTRUCTION  
OF THE  
BASTILLE.



By Jean Jaques Calet.

A FRENCH PROTESTANT.

*Who had been a prisoner there upwards of twenty years,  
and in what manner he was taken from his house, and  
who recovered his Liberty in, and who assisted at the de-  
molition of that infamous Prison.*



PRINTED FOR CHAPMAN WHITCOMB.

A

THAT AND MINUTE

ACCOUNT

OF THE RESOLUTION

ON THE

BASTILLE

By Jean Louis Gault

ATTACHED



## ACCOUNT

OF AN

## IMPRISONMENT

IN THE

## BASTILLE,

FOR UPWARDS OF TWENTY YEARS.

**A**FTER an imprisonment of more than 20 years, during which time I was wholly precluded the use of pen, paper, books, and even the possibility of hearing the articulation of a single human voice, the reader will not I hope expect any very elegant detail of my misfortunes. My object is truth; my secondary object I mean, for such in truth, I ought to call it, my first object being to procure myself a morsel of bread, and which I hope to be able to procure from the publication of my dreadful and almost unparalleled misfortunes.

One would indeed imagine that during so long a state of total seclusion from the world, the natural and unavoidable consequence must have been an entire loss of the use of language, reading, and writing: neither of these, however, in any great degree failed me. In the more fortunate, or rather in the more early part of my life (for I never recollect fortune to have been over and above kind to me) my education had been good, and my application, by no means, inconsiderable: And during the whole of my infamous imprisonment,



as soon at least, as I had tolerably well gotten over the first shock of my unhappy situation, I continued to converse by myself, and very frequently to practice writing or rather the formation of letters, upon the wall of my cell.

Before I proceed to give the melancholy account of my being conducted to prison, it will not be improper to inform the reader of the cause of my being sent there : altho, in fact, no cause was assigned—but I was accused—and, in France, to be accused is to be guilty.

I was in London when the contest subsisted between Mr. Wilkes, or rather between the Public, and the then Ministers of State, concerning the abolition of General Warrants. And as I came over to England wholly for pleasure, and as London was at that time a scene of riot and confusion, in which my interference would have been useless and impertinent, I returned to France after a few weeks, with a full resolution to visit that glorious city, when I should be able to pass my time there more to my satisfaction.

Shortly after my return to France, I went to spend a few days with a friend in the neighborhood of Paris, who among other servants had an English Groom who waited upon us at his table. His Groom, having been four years and upwards in France, was as capable of understanding; and also of speaking the French language as a native. Among the other topics, the conversation of course turned upon my late excursion to England, and the effort the nation was then making to abolish General Warrants, which I described to the company, as nearly analogous to *Lettres de Cachet*, or warrants for private arrests.

Being as I thought among friends, the conversation was free and without restraint, and I believe some very severe strictures were imprudently made by me, in particular, on *Lettres de Cachet*. And here the matter probably would have ended, had not the English Groom entered upon a fresh discussion of it in the servants hall. In short, from words they came to blows and the interference of the master and his company became necessary : the Valet, who, as he said, had re-



ceived a blow from the Groom, had drawn out his knife, and had beyond a doubt put an end to his adversary's existence, had I not very fortunately secured his arm : whereupon turning in an instant, from extreme rage, to extreme coolness, he let fall the knife, and muttered to himself with a very soft and low voice, " Well, I may perhaps find a better weapon for my purpose elsewhere." Firing at this, the Groom imprudently uttered much harsh language and several execrations against the Police : however, by the authority of my friend, and by the persuasion of myself and the rest of the company, the Valet seemed to be tolerably pacified ; in consequence of which he was prevailed upon to shake hands with the Groom. I shall never forget the frankness and openness with which the Groom shook him by the hand, nor the malicious significant look of the Valet.

The reconciliation on the part of the Valet was external only ; the Groom I believe generously declared his real sentiments.

The next morning the Valet asked his Master's permission to go to his father at Paris, who, he said was dying : should he find him better, he would return by one o'clock, but should he find him worse or dead, he hoped to be permitted to make a longer stay. As he was not returned by ten o'clock at night, we were observing that his father was probably worse or dead. But alas, no sooner had the observation been made, than the villain arrived with an officer of the Police and a large party of soldiers. Not a single word was spoken : I never remember a more dreadful silence ! the Valet put the right hand of the Groom into the right hand of the officer of Police ; nor even then was a word exchanged on either side, the party went off with their booty, the execrable Valet attending them.

The consternation occasioned in my friend's house, by this dreadful circumstance, may be better conceived than expressed : what had my friend to expect but to be sacrificed to the fury of an angry and malicious Valet. However, after the second night, he received a letter

from the servant "desiring his arrear of wages, and assuring him at the same time that *himself and his family were safe.*" The words being marked, were emphatical, and manifestly carried with them an implication. As I was the person who had introduced the conversation, and had also interfered by taking hold on the Valet's arm, when he was going to stab the Groom; I could not but suppose that by my friend and his family being safe, that I was the devoted person. However, as after a recapitulation of the whole conversation, and of what passed during our interference to part the Groom and Valet, we could not fix upon any thing whereby I could possibly have given any particular offence to the Valet. I suffered myself to be tolerably well pacified. I staid with my friend six nights after the Groom had been arrested, and then returned home, about three leagues from Paris, where I did not arrive till it was dark.

On knocking at my door, it was opened to me as usual by my servant: to whom I said, "Well Jaques, is all the family well?" the servant gave me no answer: it is impossible for any one to conceive the horror that came over me: however, I walked into the room, where I saw the usual preparations made for supper, and where were sitting my wife and daughter, a girl of nine years of age, bathed in tears, unable, and afraid to speak a single word. Whilst I was endeavouring to unravel this mystery, I was saluted by a touch on the shoulder from the valet of my friend, and the same officer of Police that had taken up the Groom at my friend's house, a few nights before; but the guard of soldiers was much stronger.

Behold reader, a wretched man for no crime whatever, reduced from the summit of happiness, to the depth of misery: his estate confiscated, his family reduced to beggary, himself shut up for life, and that perhaps unfortunately a long life, in an unwholesome dungeon.

Cursed be that government, which founded on iniquity, and in consequence thereof, viewing every thing

with a cowardly and suspicious eye, devotes with unfeeling indifference the probable and positive offender. But doubly cursed be that government, which not content with pretext establishing it's security on the misery of it's subjects, meanly calls in avarice to it's aid, in order to strip the innocent relations of the accused, of their undoubted right, their daily bread.

I have just learnt however, that my unfortunate family did not long survive so hard a fate ; my poor wife, (for tho' she has been dead many years, has to me been dead scarcely so many days. I having heard of her death but since my escape from the Bastille) she died within ten days after my commitment, raving mad, and starved to death : for it would have been death, instant death, to any person, whatever to have relieved her.

My poor infant daughter was to have been consigned over to a harder fate but Heaven forbade it. On the representation of the officer of the Police to the Marquis de——, a notorious and famous catamite of the court of Lewis the 15th, she was by him sent for, and orders were given for her being elegantly brought up, 'till she was of proper age to become subservient to his abominable purposes.

But heaven be praised, she paid the debt of nature, as I am just informed, within six months after she had fallen into the Marquis de ——'s hands.

Form to yourself, reader, the idea of a government, under which the subject offers up thanks to Almighty God, for depriving him of his dearest connections, his wife and family, and thinks himself happy in the loss of them ! Such was France.

More than 20 years ago I was forever parted from my wife and only child, and conducted, or rather dragged, in a wretched close cart, from my own house to the Bastille, under a guard of nearly one hundred soldiers : every room in my house was filled with armed men, except that in which were sitting my wife and daughter. The salute given me on the shoulder by the valet and officer of the Police was the signal for their coming out. The intendant of the Police had given strict orders that none of my family should be permit-



ned to speak, or to leave the house on pain of death, a threat which would undoubtedly have been instantly put in execution.

My two maid servants, who, on my arrival were ordered into a private room, had been treated by the soldiers in a manner too shocking, and too indecent to be committed to paper. These wretched executors of, what they call, justice, had been waiting two nights in my house expecting my arrival : and the reason why I was not apprehended at my friend's house, I am told, was, that the valet laid his information against me on the Intendant of Police giving his word and honor, that I should not be taken during my visit there.

One of my maid servants died in a few days, in consequence of the brutal treatment she had received from these officers of *Justice*; of the footman, and other unhappy female servant no account, I am told, could ever be given : it would have been certain death to have asked a single question about them.

As soon as I arrived at the Bastille, at a signal given, which I never could discover, but which I rather think was made by dropping the *lettre de Cachet* through a niche, I was received by an officer of the Bastille, whose feelings seemed to be as brutal as the odious Police of which he was an executioner. The *Lettre de Cachet*, which, as he had it in his hand, he must, as I said before, have received through a niche, was together with me, delivered to the Governor of the Bastille, as great a brute in disposition, but of more external polish, than the former. This murderer, for no less can I call him, did not do me the same honour, which, on peril of his life, he was obliged to do the *Lettre de Cachet*, for that he was compelled to receive with his own hands, but me he made over to the Deputy Governor, by whom I was consigned to the common Turnkey, who pushed me in the dark into my cell. This Deputy Governor was much such a fellow as a good painter would have made of the Police of France had he personified it : that is, the meanness and cruelty of popery triumphing over an innocent and helpless individual. A religion made up of glofs, hypocrisy,

and priest craft : pretending to pardon offences committed against Omnipotence, and actually torturing for a remark made on the vile prostitute of a profligate monarch : forgiving, for a pitiful pittance, crimes against nature, and against humanity : debarring the Almighty of the adoration due to him as God Supreme, and conferring it upon Saints, many of them as profligate and obscure as their adorers.

About seven o'clock in the morning on the next day, a nasty, squalid, cadaverous figure, who, any where, but in France, would have been taken for the figure of Famine, brought me a blanket, some clean straw, a quart of stinking water, and about four ounces of most execrable bread. As my appetite was not very good, the bread, as may be supposed, remained untouched. The water I seized with the greatest avidity, and filthy as it was, drank it off at one draught. At two in the afternoon, the same quantity of bread and water was again brought me by the same meagre figure, who observing that the bread which he had brought me in the morning, remained untouched, took back with him what he then brought me. At eight o'clock in the evening he came again bringing the same quantity of bread and water ; but observing, as at two o'clock that the bread he had brought me remained untouched, he again took, what he brought at eight o'clock, away with him.

I am sorry to say that I had formed the dreadful resolution of starving myself to death : a resolution which my *generous* keepers seemed themselves ready to meet me at least half way in. This however, even with their powerful assistance, I was unable to put into execution. Had I been furnished with any possible means of putting myself to death by an act of sudden violence, I undoubtedly should have done it. Such means, however, were effectually denied me. For, previously to my being pushed into this miserable apartment, I was stripped of my shirt, neckcloth, garters, stockings, handkerchief, shoes, and knee buckles: in lieu of which I was presented with a flannel shirt, and a pair of wretched flannel

Stockings : such was my dress, and by no means too often renewed, during my whole imprisonment : such too, as above set forth, was my food.

The chamber, if it deserve that name, in which I was confined, was up one pair of stairs. The only furniture of which was an earthen pot, and a stone about half a ton weight which served me for a seat : the room was about twelve feet high, and about a foot from the ceiling was a window about fourteen inches square; but so barricaded with iron bars, that it would have been utterly impossible even for a sparrow to have passed between them. In consequence of the breadth of the room from the wall to the window, which was scarcely five feet, I had no possible chance of seeing even the sky ; more than that I could not expect to see through the scanty crannies of the iron bars : to have reached the window would have been utterly impossible, and as it could have answered no possible end whatever, but to have created a jealousy in my brutal keepers, so did I never once think of attempting it. The length of the room was about eighteen feet : the gloominess, and melancholy of it, dreadful to a degree : dreadful from the sad reflection of it's having been the tomb of many a living corpse, devoted like me to the jealousy of a cruel and tyrannical government, and more dreadful to me as being the then unhappy possessor of it.

The ceiling of this accursed apartment consisted of iron bars, nearly as thick as my wrist, and within a quarter of an inch of each other cross wise. This, for the two or three first months of my imprisonment, I even appeared unaccountable to me, as the floor was of deal.

What will not the love of liberty do ? and what improbable and even impossible hopes will it not furnish us : from this consideration, namely of the floor being composed of deal, I flattered myself that one day or other I might be able to effect my escape : and my hope of doing it was the rather flattered, as I had observed that one of the boards was loose, nearly the whole length of the cell : and I had taken it up, not from any idea of then putting my project into execu-



tion, but of getting the thing as it were in train: in a moment I heard the turnkey at the door, and tho' it took him some time to open it, yet was I, unable, from surprize, to replace the board, or even to lay it out of my hands, so great was my consternation.

The turnkey on seeing my awkward situation, immediately locked the door again, and in less than five minutes returned with four men whom I had never before seen, bringing with them a lanthorn. He was locked with me into my cell, and setting his lanthorn upon the stone, which I before said was in my cell, very deliberately took up almost every board before my face, and shewed me, what, till then, I never could have suspected to have been the case, a floor consisting of iron plates at least half an inch thick: having replaced the boards, he gave a rap at the door, in consequence of which it was immediately opened, and he took his leave of me, with the most contemptuous sneer in his countenance that insolence could invent, there ended my hopes of an escape. I was not however, as I expected, put in irons, but was treated by my keeper with excessive contempt, and silent allusions to my project of forming an escape. During the whole of the ceremony of the turnkey's removing the boards, not a syllable passed between us: as he had positive orders no doubt never to utter a syllable, so I, thro' fear of ill treatment, and at the same time, considering it as useless, never once opened my lips.

I must confess that on my first commitment to that prison, the disgrace of a christian country, and the horror of France, I expected every day or rather every hour, to be put to the torture: this however was not the case: my body was no further put to the rack, than as it partook of the sufferings of my mind: let the humane reader form to himself the idea of being, to a certainty, confined during life, in such a chamber as I have described; debarred of bodily exercise, of the liberty of breathing a free or wholesome air, of the enjoyment of such amusements as the mind of a rational being, tired of idleness and inactivity naturally has recourse to, and from which it as naturally finds relief,

let him form to himself, I say this idea, and let him refrain, if possible from the most sensible emotions, in behalf of the unfortunate prisoners. A reflection this, that must operate powerfully upon the feelings of any one but of an inconstant of French Police, or of his base and infamous, but now degraded employers.

To the horror of the above scene, may be added the terrible apprehension the prisoner is hourly under, of being put to the torture : of this, no notice whatever is given him : he literally has no assurance whatever of not being taken out of his sleep and torn to pieces by the cruelty of the officers of the prison.

The last human being to whom I spoke for more than twenty years, to the day of my release (I relate it with pity to myself, and with shame for my country) were my unfortunate wife and daughter : and from these, the friends of my bosom I was not suffered to receive any answer.

I shall endeavour to be as concise as possible, in the account of my imprisonment, not wishing myself to reflect upon a subject, on which I cannot reflect, but with the greatest horror : and which having no variety in itself cannot but be very uninteresting to the reader.

Suffice it therefore to say, that I was kept in the same room continually, and never once during so many years imprisonment was suffered to pass over the threshold, my whole and only food was bread and water, both bad, and very bad, in its kind. I never spoke to or was ever once spoken to, by any human creature whatever. The only variety that I ever experienced, was in respect of heat and cold; and for this I was indebted to the seasons.

During the five or six last winters, the cold was most dreadfully punishing ; I made a sign to the Turnkey to have an additional blanket, and stockings, but of this he took not the least notice. In summer the air was fetid, and suffocating, and frequently to such a degree, that the very Turnkey himself who was a walking dunghill, was utterly unable to face the noisome effluvia on opening the door of my cell. Each, reader

was the variety I speak of, but I shall pass on to that glorious day in which I recovered my liberty.

About four o'clock in the morning, I heard, what I had never before heard during my whole infamous imprisonment, a variety of voices under my window, and presently, the cry "to arms." As I concluded that it was nothing more than some poor helpless individual who either had, or who was then attempting to make his escape, after wishing him every possible success, and having called down every possible curse on the police of France, I again fell asleep. The noise however did not end here; I then concluded that some of the prisoners had actually risen against their keepers, and on hearing the firing of a musquet was more than ever confirmed in my opinion, that this must have been the case. But as I well knew that, even had it been the case, the contest must terminate in favor of the officers of the Bastille, I again laid myself down indifferent about the consequences.

In less than an hour I heard a much greater uproar, and a shout of "*Vive la Liberte*," Liberty forever. This exclamation thought I, can never proceed from the mouths of the officers of the Bastille. Nor, indeed, did it, but from the mouths of those forty brave insurgents who were but a small part of the assertors of the glorious emancipating of France.

These unfortunate persons were admitted within the walls of the Bastille, on pretext of making terms of surrender between the Governor and the populace. But, such was the faith of a French government, scarcely were they entered within the walls of that grave of Liberty, when they were set upon by a well armed, tho' not numerous military, which is always kept in the Bastille, and instantly, contrary to the most solemn promise on part of the officers of the Bastille, put to death by fire and sword. Dreadful triumph! and succeeded by a shout very different from that of "*Vive la Liberte*," that of "*Vive la Police*" or slavery forever.

It will not here be improper to observe, that the military, and every officer of the Bastille, except the Governor, is, in fact as much a prisoner, as



any prisoner there, except that he has the whole range of the premises of the prison to walk in. When he enters upon his office he takes it for life, and he would instantly be put to the torture, and then to death, were he to be seen, or even to express a wish to be without the walls of the prison ; nor can the Governor himself be absent more than ten nights together, and that only by permission of the King, and with his sign manuel. A plain proof this, that the Police is thoroughly ashamed of the cruelty and injustice which it is continually guilty of.

But to proceed :

I now heard silence demanded, and proclamation made (by order of the Governor as I was afterwards informed) to quarter the bodies of the unfortunate persons, who had so nobly on their part, and so disgracefully on the part of the Governor and officers of the Bastille, lost their lives in defence of liberty ; and to throw their limbs over the battlements to the terror of their companions, in order to shew them what they were to expect, as a chastisement of their rebellion, if they did not immediately disperse.

This however was not put in execution, the barbarians contented themselves with hanging the dead bodies on the paliades, and exposing them in a manner the most brutal and ignominious, and in such a manner as would have disgraced an inquisition, or any thing but a French Police.

By this act of brutality, the number of the insurgents, and their fury, was increased at least fifty fold. And matters were now come to such a pitch, that nothing but a surrender could possibly save the lives of the persons in the Bastille. This being evident to the Governor, he called all the officers of the prison together, and proposed (for I heard him with my own ears) to put every prisoner to death, and to bury their bodies, in order that nothing relative to that place of confinement, might transpire.

Reader, if thou hast any feeling for my unhappy situation, exert it for me here ; if thou hast one tear,

drop it for me here. My very heart bleeds at the bare recollection of the dreadful proposal.

During this conversation amongst the officers of the Bastille, the Governor was summoned to the wall to know whether he would surrender. He would surrender, he said, if they would swear to him to spare his life. This however was even so far from being promised to him, that he was, in the most positive and solemn manner assured, that, in consequence of his cruelty and breach of faith towards their companions, he should infallibly be put to death within three hours after his surrender; that if he deferred his surrender ten minutes, he should be put to the most exquisite torture. This however, was so far from prevailing upon him to set open the gates, that he absolutely refused to give up the prison, and came down from the battlements.

Upon this, the fellow who had the management of the draw-bridge, and who also had the keys of the gate of the prison, and who (as I afterwards learnt) was more than fifty yards from the Governor, hearing this resolution of the Governor, let fall as if by accident, the drawbridge, and offered immediately to open the gate on condition that they would spare his life.

This proposal was made & executed in half a minute, and the insurgents were put in complete possession of the prison. The military within the Bastille were summoned to lay down their arms, which demand they immediately complied with. The greatest silence and order was observed. The Governor was called for, and ordered to go down upon his knees, and answer aloud to every question.

Q. Are you the governor of the Bastille?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you any more military force within these walls than these men who have now laid down their arms?

A. None.

Q. Give me the names of every officer of this prison?

A. Complied with.

Q. Let every civil officer of this prison stand on my right hand.

A. Complied with ; and all answered to their names.

Q. How many prisoners have you at present ?

A. About three hundred.

Q. Do you ever use the torture ?

On the governor's hesitating to give a direct answer, the interrogator said to one of the insurgents, point your musquet to his breast, and on my taking off my hat, fire upon him.

Q. I repeat my question—do you ever make use of the torture ?

A. But seldom, and always with the greatest reluctance.

Q. Deliver to me the keys of each cell.

Sir, there are nearly four hundred keys, which are mostly in the hands of the different keepers.

Q. Let each turnkey produce his keys.

A. Complied with.

The Governor was then ordered to follow, and to direct his officers to open every cell. O heavens ! What a scene ! Three hundred and seventeen poor wretches, many of whom had not seen the light for more than two thirds of their lives, restored in a moment to the common rights of humanity.

Many of these poor wretches were so emaciated as to be unable to stand ; some of them came forth shantle with joy ; others from the sense of their dreadful sufferings, and of what they had, in all probability, yet to suffer for many a tedious year, had lapsed into a state of idiocy ; and one poor man, in particular, was obliged to be lifted out, being unable to stand upon his legs, in consequence of having had his knees and ankle bones dislocated by the torture. This unfortunate prisoner had been there upwards of seven years, and had been tortured once every year.

As many of the prisoners as were capable of bearing arms, had the arms & cloaths of such soldiers as were



in the Bastille given to them ; &, in return, the soldiers themselves were clothed in the rags of the prisoners, and in that condition turned out of the prison gates.

Q. Are all the cells set open ?

A. Yes, Sir.

The person who had managed the whole of this business, with the Governor, and whose name shall never be divulged by me, returned to the place where he had interrogated the Governor, previously to his attending him to the cells ; and said,

Where is the man who let down the draw bridge, and opened the gates of the prison ?

After a few minutes, a wretched and miserable figure came forward, and said that " he was the person, but that he had opened the gates on positive promise of having his life spared and therefore humbly hoped for mercy." The gentleman who had, as I said before, examined the Governor, taking him by the hand, said, " I hope, friend, you have nothing to fear." My countrymen, this man has in all Probability, saved the effusion of much blood, by putting us in quiet possession of this prison ; it is to him we owe this safe and easy conquest. I know not who promised him his life, but I hope we shall one and all ratify the promise. No man, I trust, will hurt a hair of his head : I recommend him to you, as to men of honour and humanity."

The question was then again put to the Governor.

Q. Do you use the torture at your own discretion, or have you a particular order for using it, each time it is used ?

A. The order is given when the prisoner is committed, that he should be tortured at certain and fixed periods.

Q. Who attends the torturing of a Prisoner ?

A. A sworn Surgeon of the Police, the Intendant of Police, myself, twelve soldiers, and nine turnkeys.

Q. Does not the Surgeon of the Police live in the

Bastille ?

A. No, he and the Intendant of Police are the only persons admitted within these walls.

Q. Does the degree of torture depend upon you ?

A. No, upon neither of us.

Q. Why then is the Surgeon and Intendant of Police sent ?

A. The Intendant to testify of the prisoner's having had the torture, and the Surgeon to take care of him afterwards.

Q. Where is the torture performed ?

A. In a room on purpose.

Q. Attend me to this room.

A. Yes Sir. I hope I shall, at least not be put to the torture.

Q. I hope not ; it shall not be done by my consent.

The gentleman came back in about a quarter of an hour, and said briefly, that he had been eye-witness to a scene too shocking to be looked upon : he then ordered the implements of torture to be brought out, and to be destroyed by the officers of the Bastille themselves. After which the Governor was ordered to prepare to die within one hour, and was accordingly permitted to be closeted with the Confessor of the Bastille. At the expiration of the hour he was brought out and hanged over the battlements in the sight of at least a hundred thousand populace, of whom the Giant of this Enchanted Castle had long been the terror and dread.

The shout was universal, it ascended to God's throne an offering of a sweet smelling savour. A most grateful offering to the Father of Justice and mercy.

And now (having seen by glorious experiment that the lord of this castle of terror was vulnerable,) it was determined to try whether the walls of the prison were not as liable to mortality. In three days the whole prison was rased to the ground. What became of the other officers of the Bastille it is difficult to say ; some of them,

on being turned out of the prison gates, were instantly torn to pieces by the populace, not, however, before they had been made to take down the bodies of the men, who had under truce, entered the prison, and whose bodies after they had been most shamefully murdered, had hung on the Palisadoes, and buried them in the most respectful manner.

Having given a very faithful and accurate account of the taking possession of this fortress, (if such I may call it) which till this day, was thought impregnable, I shall proceed to set before the reader, the manner in which the destruction of it was carried on.

First of all Proclamation was made precisely in the following words.

"In the name of Almighty God, the Father of  
"Mercies, in the name of Jesus Christ his Son, and in  
"the name of the Holy Spirit, be perfect Love and Lib-  
"erty, to this and every Nation under Heaven forever-  
"more : Amen."

"Whereas this odious prison, called the Bastille has,  
"in particular, for many years, existed the terror and  
"disgrace of Religion and Liberty, the disgrace of  
"former reigns, and of the faithful and good subjects of  
"his present most Christian Majesty Lewis the sixteenth,  
"and of our most Christian Queen, whom God pre-  
"serve ; we, the Nation, do hereby condemn to utter  
"annihilation, perdition, the said odious prison, as be-  
"ing highly disgraceful to us as men, and to our coun-  
"try as Christians, and highly reflecting upon our  
"allegiance to our most Christian King ; determining  
"hereby to banish tyranny and oppression, the influ-  
"ence of wicked Ministers, and the damnable power  
"of the church of Rome, Amen."

No sooner was the Proclamation made, than the demolition of the building was begun, and in the most workman-like and methodical manner. The lead of the roof was first of all stripped off and thrown down upon the ground, and was then, as were all the other parts of the Bastille, as fast as they were pulled down, thrown into the ditch which surrounded it.



As soon as the lead was stripped off, there appeared a roof of Iron plates half an inch thick, screw'd down to iron bars of four inches diameter. So that it would have been utterly impossible for any prisoner whatever to have gotten through the roof. This, indeed, the screws being put in from without side would have prevented, as would also the height of the rooms: those of the upper story being three or four feet higher than those on the lower stories: when these iron plates, and the bars to which they were screw'd, were removed, an arched roof of stone presented itself, built in the form of an oven: under this arch which was much more difficult to be broken through than the iron roof, it was presumed that the cells would appear: but this was by no means the case: there was yet another ceiling of large iron bars laid cross wise, screwed together very forcibly, and under a ceiling of boards. In each of the upper cells was a set of iron rings and chains fastened to the floor, to which a prisoner was to be chained, in case he attempted an escape.

The roof of the prison being completely taken off, the walls were next pulled down to the bottom of the uppermost set of the cells, the floors of these cells had nothing peculiar in them: their strength consisted in the iron ceiling of the cells below them: which were of plates of iron riveted, instead of screwed to very large and closely laid iron bars, nor was it possible to have removed them but by taking the weight of the side walls off the ends of them: by this method the matter was effected with tolerable ease. And now, night coming on, it was agreed to suspend the work by common consent. And every key belonging to the Bastille, together with the outer gates of it having been buried in the ditch under some thousand loads of rubbish, and the cells being open, as many as could get lodging in the prison did so: many returned home till the morning, and many thousands remained abroad the whole night; for my own part, I took up with my old apartment, though with

this difference, that instead of solitude I had company enough, and instead of spending the night as a miserable captive, I spent it with as much pleasure, or I hope with more, than if I had been Governor of the Bastille.

The next morning, by break of day, the demolition of the prison proceeded as regularly and in as spirited a manner as on the day before : and although the wall was much thicker, the nearer we came to the ground, yet was it lowered with considerably more ease than nearer the top of the building, on account of there being less lead and iron work among the stones.

Every hour or less, fresh persons were employed, as well to throw down the wall, as also to remove the materials into the ditch : and so great was the number of people, and such their eagerness to supply the places of those who had been at work, that had the prison been ten times as large, it would have been taken down in as short a time : during the whole of this, as also on the preceding day, there was no cessation of labour whatever, and by the time that it was too dark to carry on the work on the second evening, the prison was taken down to the surface of the earth. Whilst one part of the populace was at work on the Bastille and on the Governor's house, another part was at work on the wall that surrounded the prison, which was thrown unto the ditch by the first night. The draw-bridge also was thrown unto the ditch and buried under the rubbish.

When it was dark, the people retired as on the former night, and the most strict order and decorum were observed.

It must doubtless appear surprising that it never once occurred to any person present to examine the apartments under ground : nor, 'till the prison was pulled down to the surface, were these subterraneous cells I believe once thought of :

As the doors of these chambers of death, if I may so call them, had not been opened, and as the keys of them, as well as every key belonging to the Bastille had, as has been said, been buried under some thousand loads of rubbish, it was now impossible to open them. Nothing remained therefore but to come at them by taking off their ceilings. It was suspected that there might be many unfortunate prisoners confined in these noisome and dreadful abodes, which, were it the case they must be at least forty eight hours without victuals or drink before they could be relieved. In consequence of these reflections, to persons eagerly wishing to restore their fellow creatures to the joyful face of day, and to the common rights of humanity, and sensible at the same time what they must then suffer from hunger and thirst, and still had to suffer before they could possibly be relieved, the approach of the morning, was expected, not only with the utmost, but even with the most painful impatience.

By nine o'clock in the morning of the third day, the ceiling over these subterraneous cells, which were precisely the same with those of the sets of cells above them, were intirely removed : and in these cells, to our infinite satisfaction, and utter astonishment, not a single prisoner was found.

These cells were in all respects like those above them, except that they had no window in them : instead of which there was a little wretched light let in through the door : and in order to prevent any unhappy person who might be the tenant of them, from a possibility of seeing any thing, a hole was cut in the left hand side of the door next the cell, and in the right hand side of the outermost door.

Having already given a very accurate account of the windows of the cells, I now proceed to a discription of the doors of them. To each cell there were three doors, all of them of prodigious strength, one of which is open-



ed outwardly toward the goaler ; this door, although of wood, might with much greater propriety be said to be of iron, being studded with nails with monstrous heads, so as almost to meet each other, and to form within a very little, a superficies of iron : they were also covered transversely with iron bars, screwed on with the heads of the screws alternately placed, one to the outside of the cell, and one to the inside of it, between every two screws was a very strong rivet of iron ; this door was locked by a prodigious double lock of peculiar strength and construction, and also with a pad-lock : this being done, a grated door wholly of iron was pulled down like a sash, between this and the outermost door. The iron bars, of which this sash was composed, were solid, measuring two inches on every side : its interstices were about four inches wide. This door locked on the side into the wall in all respects like another door, and was also locked by a staple of prodigious strength, to the ground. This grate or door being made fast, the outermost door was locked precisely in the same manner as the door next the prison : three no bad securities these, against a poor helpless individual : nor indeed against the good wishes of such of his friends as might have any idea of conferring upon him his liberty.

A principal reason why the prisoners in France (I mean what are called the state prisoners) are kept with so zealous an eye is, because government having generally imprisoned them for nothing, and in most cases having used the torture, it is ashamed and afraid to release them, lest they should tell their history to the disadvantage of the state. So the minister was afraid to release La Tude, lest he should write his memoirs : La Tude —, did write his memoirs : and they will ever remain a disgrace to the last and present reigns of France.

But to proceed,

As soon as it was perceived that no prisoner what-

ever was confined in these subterraneous cells, it was determined to dig at the bottom of each of them, in order to examine whether there were any rooms under them : to be fully satisfied of this, four feet depth of earth was taken out of each cell : but no signs of other rooms appearing, the great stones, which composed the foundation of the prison, and which made also the side walls of these subterraneous cells, were thrown down into the holes, from which the four feet of earth had been taken, and the earth, which had been dug out, served to cover the place where the infamous Bastille had so long and so lately stood, a spot now capable of a better harvest, hitherto fruitful only in cruelty and oppression, in the sighs and tears of the wretched prisoner and captive.

The reader will please to observe that I am not giving a description of the Bastille, no one can be more improper to undertake a task of that sort than a person who was carried in by night, and thrust into a misera-dark cell, in which he was kept upwards of twenty years a close prisoner. By the time that I was let out of my cell, the prison was so full of the populace that I could get no competent view of the premises of it, nor indeed did I ever think of doing it ; whatever the premises or gardens of it were, they were destroyed, together with the buildings, before I ever thought of examining them. All I shall speak of therefore will be what came immediately under my eye.

Besides the prison itself, there were two other buildings, both of them exceedingly low, within the walls of this gloomy mansion, namely the house of the Governor and the deputy Governor, both of them under the same roof ; and a house for the common turnkeys. The former, as having nothing peculiar belonging to it, need no description. Of the latter I shall say but little. At the door of this house for the common turnkeys, there used to stand, night and day, a sentinel, into whose box came a bell rope, which when pulled, rang

a bell in every room of the house at the same time, in which the common goalers lived. This was regularly rang three times a day when the goalers went to feed the unhappy prisoners : and in case of any alarm ; but never else upon any occasion whatever.

If the goalers visit the cells, or any particular cell, at any other, than at the stated hours it was always done (truly characteristic of a French Police) without giving this notice. No turnkey dared to visit a cell on any pretence whatever, at any other hour than the stated hours on pain of instant death, without an order from the Governor, or, in his absence, from the deputy Governor, which order was always given in person by word of mouth.

The military, I have been informed, never interfered with the prisoners, nor with the goalers ; nor were they allowed to associate with them, or even to converse with them. They lived in barracks built against the wall of the Bastille, which surrounded the ditch ; they were under the command of the Governor, tho a Sergeant was always their ostensible commander.

The house in which the goalers lived, was circular, in one part of it was a large room, in which they ate, drank and associated, during the day time ; all around this room were other chambers, in which they slept, and in which, as I before said, a bell was hung, as there was also in the common room. Under this house was a very spacious vault, which we took for a charnel house, but on opening it, it proved to be nothing more than a place in which they kept victuals, and it had in it several vessels of weak wine.

This vault received its light and air from half a dozen small windows, which were secured by a few slight iron bars ; but, within it was a door, or rather three doors, made precisely like the doors of the cells in which the prisoners were kept. To break these open in any reasonable time was utterly impossible, it was therefore resolved upon to remove them by taking away the stone work on the sides of the posts ; this was,



at last, effected with infinite labor and difficulty; the staple to which the middle, or fast door was fastened to the ground, gave us incredible trouble; it was however determined to open it, and opened it was.

The conjectures of what might be the contents of this strongly fortified chamber, were numerous, and, as it afterwards proved, all of them erroneous. One conjectured that it must be the room set apart for torture; another, that it was a vault for burying the dead, or a charnel house; others, a mine, in case of assault; however it turned out to be a very large and spacious room full of arms of different sorts, ancient and modern, and had in it also some gunpowder and ball. The windows of it, which were four only, were very strongly fortified and glazed; they looked out thro the wall that surrounded the Bastille, into the great ditch, and were so formed as not to be very visible on the outside. Such of the arms as were found in this room, and which were of use, were put into the hands of the insurgents; the old guns which fired with a match, were left behind, and buried in the ruins, as being wholly useless. The arch which covered this room, (for it ran from under the house in which the common goalers lived, to the outside of the wall of the Bastille) was dug thro, and the room, together with the Bastille, its gates, walls, Governor's house, and, in short the whole premises belonging to it, were razed, not only to the ground, but two feet, at least, beneath the ground, and no trace of the spot, on which it stood, left behind.

This being done proclamation was made for silence; and an herald was ordered to return thanks to Almighty God, for this singular national delivery, from a tyrannical and oppressive government, and a curse was denounced against those who should rebuild, or attempt, or propose, or wish to rebuild this prison. The whole was concluded with three acclamations of "Vive le Roi," "Vive la Liberte," "Vive la Nation."

I cannot myself (I may perhaps be singular in my opinion) forbear thinking but that the French Court has suffered in its turn, for the many acts of cruelty and perfidy it has been repeatedly guilty of towards a part of its subjects, which, on all occasions, has lived in the most orderly manner under that cruel and oppressive government. I mean the Protestants.

Thus have I done, what I proposed, laid before the public in the best manner I am able, a full, clear and accurate account of the destruction of this once infamous prison, the terror alike of the wicked and good; the Grave of Liberty, the scandal of France, the disgrace of Europe. It was my most determined resolution not to quit that odious and detestable spot so long as one stone was left standing upon another; It was my resolution I say, and I adhered to it most strenuously.

**THE END.**



( 27 )

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th inst. in relation to the above matter. I have the honor to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration. I am, Sir, very respectfully,  
Your obedient servant,  
J. H. [Signature]





